

# India/Koodankulam: The Silent and Telling Emergency in India

Tuesday 31 July 2012, by [UDAYAKUMAR S. P.](#) (Date first published: 26 June 2012).

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Today is the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the infamous emergency that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed on the people of India. While some people were quite happy that the bureaucrats came to offices on time, shopkeepers kept price lists outside their shops, trains were punctual and so forth, many people were worried and concerned about the curtailment of our freedoms and entitlements. As a 15-year-old boy, I was worried about my father's safety (as he was active in the DMK party), the complete absence of freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, and most importantly, freedom from fear. People were afraid to speak their minds out, the newspapers were full of blank spaces because of censorship, and the society was enveloped by a thin layer of fear and suspicion. That was not the India I had grown up to love and cherish. Never did I imagine even in my wildest nightmares that I would find myself in a similar but silent emergency after some 37 years of liberty and freedom.

Today is the 100<sup>th</sup> day of my and Pushparayan's self-exile here at Idinthakarai. On March 18, 2012 at 4:45 PM the Personal Assistant (General) of the Tirunelveli Collector called me and asked me and Fr. F. Jayakumar, the Parish Priest of Idinthakarai, to go and meet the Collector in his office the next morning at 10 am. The Collector, Dr. R. Selvaraj, himself called me later that night and the next day morning asking us to go and meet him. A warning bell rang in my mind and I told my friends that we were all going to be arrested. My intuition proved to be right; some 200 of our friends from Koodankulam, Koottapuli, Chettikulam and Erode were arrested. Rayan and I and 13 others embarked on an indefinite hunger strike demanding our friends' immediate and unconditional release.

The Superintendent of Police, Mr. Vijayendra Bidari, called me on my mobile on March 19<sup>th</sup> evening and asked me to surrender. With him still on the phone, I asked the thousands of people who had gathered there for their permission to surrender and they all shouted down the idea. I asked the SP to send enough vehicles and two officers with the arrest warrants so that we all would get arrested en masse. He did not like that idea and hung up by saying, "This is the last time I speak to you." We used to speak to each other quite often as I got his oral permission for all our rallies, campaigns and public meetings.

Ever since March 18<sup>th</sup>, Rayan and I never left this small coastal village (except two short visits to the nearby Kuthenkuzhi village by sea). Thousands of people including women and children from all the neighboring villages were keeping a constant round-the-clock vigil to protect us from police action. The Tamil Nadu government imposed 144 prohibitory orders in our area and blocked our access to food, water, electricity and other essentials such as baby food, vegetables and fruits. Young mothers were forced to feed their babies sugar water; pregnant women could not go to hospital; and men could not leave or enter the village. We were surrounded by a massive deployment of police personnel from all over Tamil Nadu and paramilitary forces. We rightly called the situation another 'Mullivaikal.' Indeed, it was!

Pushparayan, Jesuraj and I are not afraid of police arrest or incarceration; we just do not want the struggle to be folded up by the Tamil Nadu police, the Government of India and its intelligence agencies. This is the reason why we have decided not to venture out of Idinthakarai. This self-exile has not been easy or smooth-going. But the singular achievement of our self-exile is keeping the struggle alive and active with several hunger strikes, public meetings, campaigns, planning meetings and other assorted activities.

So far, more than 300 false cases have been filed against us, the leaders of the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE), and the struggling people of southern Tamil Nadu. Up until December 31, 2011 some 170 FIRs were filed against us. A friend tabulated these cases and had this to say: "Just between September and December 2011, ...109 FIRs (First Investigation Report) have been filed against 55,795 people and an undisclosed number of "others." At least 21 sections of the IPC (Indian Penal Code) have been used, include Section 121 (Waging War against the Government of India) against 3600 people, and Section 124A (Sedition) against 3200 people. The Koodankulam police station has the dubious distinction, perhaps, of being the station where the largest number of "sedition" and "waging war" cases have been filed in the shortest time in the history of colonial and independent India." Here is a partial list of cases that were filed against us just in October and November of 2011:

Cr. No. 299/11 D.O. 13.10.11

Sec. 121, 143, 188, 153(A), 341, 506(1), 505(1)(b) & 7(1)(a) CLA Act R/W 120(b)

S P. Udayakumar and 19 others (including 4 women)

Cr. No. 301/11 D.O. 14.10.11

Sec. 143, 147, 188 R/W 34

S. P. Udayakumar and 13 others (including one woman) as well as 2,000 people

Cr. No. 303/11 D.O. 14.10.11

Sec. 147, 148, 341, 294(b), 353, 506(ii) IPC R/W 34.

S. P. Udayakumar and 13 others (including one woman) as well as 1,000 people.

Cr. No. 304/11 D.O. 14.10.11

Sec. 147, 148, 452, 121, 506(I) IPC R/W 34 IPC

S. P. Udayakaumr and 2 others as well as 15 supporters.

Cr. No. 305/11 D.O. 14.10.11

Sec. 147, 148, 452, 121, 506(I) IPC R/W 34 IPC

S. P. Udayakumar and two others as well as many people.

Cr. No. 306/11 D.O. 14.10.11

Sec. 147, 148, 452, 121, 506(I) IPC R/W 34 IPC.

Allwyn and four others as well as many people.

Cr. No. 307/11 D.O. 14.10.11

Sec. 147, 148, 452, 121, 506(II) IPC R/W 34 IPC.

S. P. Udayakumar and three others as well as many.

Cr. No. 315/11 D.O. 15.10.11

Sec. 109, 121, 124 (A), 125, 143, 153(A), 341, 353, 505(1)(b), 506(i) IPC & Sec 3 of PDDL Act & 7(1)(a) CLA Act. R/W 120 IPC.

S. P. Udayakumar and 16 others (including 6 priests, 2 doctors, 2 women)

Cr. No. 316/11 D.O. 16.10.11

Sec. 147, 188, 353, 341 R/W 34 IPC.  
S. P. Udayakumar and 13 others.

Cr. No. 372/11 D.O. 21.11.11  
Sec. 121, 124A, 143, 153(A), 447, 505(1)(b) & 7(1)(a) CLA Act, 120(B).  
S. P. Udayakumar and 14 others as well as 3,000 people.

Cr. No. 373/11 D.O. 21.11.11  
Sec. 143, 188, 147, 124(A), 153(A)  
S. P. Udayakumar and 19 others as well as 450 people.

As you can see, some of the above cases carry the charges of 'sedition' and 'waging war against the Indian State'. But what is interesting is the fact that the Prime Minister of India, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the Tirunelveli District Collector, the Tirunelveli Superintendent of Police (SP) and many other officials have been meeting with us on a regular basis as the diary below establishes. The question here is if we are guilty of 'sedition' and of 'waging war against the Indian State' and so forth, don't these officials become co-conspirators in our crimes and stand accused of abetting us, the dangerous criminals? Shouldn't the same charges be brought against them also?

### **September 15, 2011**

Tamil Nadu Ministers Mr. Chellapandian, Mr. Chenthur Pandian, Mr. Shanmuganathan, Mr. Nainar Nagendran, MLA, and Mr. Rajendran, MLA came along with the District Collector, Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Superintendent of Police (SP), Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) and a few other officials to Radhapuram to meet with the Struggle Committee members.

September 21, 2011

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu met with us in her office and passed a cabinet resolution the next day asking the central government to halt all the work until the fears and concerns of the local people were allayed. The Catholic Bishops of Kottar and Thoothukudi and the CSI Bishops of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi and several other prominent citizens were with us. The CM talked to us for some 45 minutes.

### **October 7, 2011**

A large delegation of the Struggle Committee members, the Catholic Bishops of Kottar and Thoothukudi and the CSI Bishops of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu politicians, MPs and Tamil Nadu ministers met with the Prime Minister of India under the leadership of Tamil Nadu Finance Minister, Mr. O. Panneerselvam. Minister of State Mr. V. Narayanaswamy, Dr. Sreekumar Banerjee, the head of the Department of Atomic Energy, Dr. S. K. Jain, the head of the NPCIL, Mr. Shivsankar Menon, National Security Advisor, were also with us during the meeting.

October 10, 2011

Some of the Struggle Committee members had talks with the RDO and Additional Deputy SP (ADSP) from 12:30 to 3:00 PM; we insisted on their honoring the Tamil Nadu Cabinet resolution and stopping work at the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP).

October 20, 2011

Some of the Struggle Committee members met with Kerala Minister Mr. P. J. Joseph, Chief Minister Mr. Oomen Chandi, and the opposition leader Mr. V.S. Achuthanandan in their homes and/or offices.

**November 1, 2011**

Some of the Struggle Committee members were at the Collector's office talking to the Collector from 11:00 am to 2:30 pm.

**November 7, 2011**

Some members of the Struggle Committee spent several hours talking to the Collector in his office.

November 8, 2011

M. Pushparayan and Mi. Pa. Jesuraj met with the Central Government's Expert Group and held talks at the Collector's office; the Collector and the SP also participated in the meeting.

November 16, 2011

Some of the Struggle Committee members met the SP in his office at 3:00 pm; then we met with the District Revenue Officer (DRO) and the Collector's Personal Assistance (General) at the Collector Office.

November 18, 2011

In the second meeting of the team, M. Pushparayan and Mi. Pa. Jesuraj met with the Central Government's Expert Group and held talks at the Collector's office; the Collector and the SP also participated in the meeting.

November 30, 2011

Some of the Struggle Committee members went to the Collector's office and met with the PA(G) at 5:00 pm; waited for the Collector who came only at 6:30 pm. Complained to him about more people entering the KKNPP, Dinamalar's criminal activities, and the Tamil Nadu government's slapping severe cases on us. He promised to look into all these issues and to send the RDO and the Deputy SP (DSP) to the KKNPP premises.

**December 13, 2011**

S. Sivasubramanian, Mi. Pa. Jesuraj, Muhilan and S. P. Udayakumar went to see the Collector at 5 PM. We had a long discussion with the Collector, the Planning Officer, RDO, ASP, one other official, and the PA(G) about the inflow of workers and vehicles into the KKNPP.

December 15, 2011

In the third meeting of the team, M. Pushparayan and Mi. Pa. Jesuraj met with the Central Government's Expert Group and held talks at the Collector's office; the Collector and the SP also participated in the meeting.

**January 3, 2012**

Some Struggle Committee members met the PA(G) at 5:30 pm as the Collector wasn't there in his office. We gave him a memo for the Chief Minister.

January 6, 2012

Met with the ASP, ADSP and Inspectors of Koodankulam and Radhapuram police stations and

discussed the people's siege issue at length. The officials agreed to go and check the presence of workers at the KKNPP tomorrow.

January 12, 2012

Mi. Pa. Jesuraj, Muhilan and S. P. Udayakumar gave a memorandum to the BSNL officer at Radhapuram and the Tahsildar of Radhapuram. Then some of the Struggle Committee members went to Cheranmahadevi to meet the Sub-Collector, Ms. Rohini Ramdas Bidari at her office.

January 20, 2012

S. Sivasubramanian, Mi. Pa. Jesuraj, Muhilan and S. P. Udayakumar went to Tirunelveli to meet the SP and handed over a complaint about the Dinamalar newspaper. Then met with the PA(G) of Collector about the same issue. Later met with the Collector in his office and discussed about the Jan 31<sup>st</sup> meeting.

January 31, 2012

The fourth meeting with the Central government's Expert Group did not take place. As our car entered the compound and approached the main office, a small group of some 15 men (both Congress and Hindu Munnani thugs) came rushing towards our car and pelted stones and attacked the vehicle. We drove out of the Collector office compound and refused to participate in the talks. Talked to the press and left the scene. Police escort came and took us to the Muntradaippu police station; The SP also came and met us there. In the meantime, some 10,000 people had gathered in front of the KKNPP front gate. We rushed to Koodankulam and talked to the people for almost an hour and asked them to disperse peacefully. The DIG, SP, RDO and several hundred policemen were there at Koodankulam. Took some people to meet the DIG at the Koodankulam police station and had a dialogue with him. Took the injured women to Radhapuram govt. hospital for treatment and they were all admitted as in-patients.

February 18, 2012

People laid a siege in front of the KKNPP from 12 pm till 9 pm. The Tamil Nadu government's expert panel visited the KKNPP site at around 5:30 pm. They were there for hardly an hour. We held talks with the DIG and the Collector at the Koodankulam police station with two demands: reducing the work force at KKNPP to 20 and the Tamil Nadu panel should come to our villages to meet with the people.

February 19, 2012

Some of the Struggle Committee members went to the Collectorate in the afternoon. We had a long meeting with the team, Dr. Iniyan, Dr. M.R. Sreenivasan, Mr. Vijayaraghavan and Dr. Arivu Oli. The Collector, SP, DRO, RDO and PA(G) were also there.

February 29, 2012

We met the AIADMK MP Mr. Manoj Pandian as we were waiting to meet with the Chief Minister and talked to him about the struggle. M. Pushparayan, S. Sivasubramanian, Dr. R. Ramesh and S. P. Udayakumar met with the CM. She stood up, smiled and received us. I gave her some of my books. I spoke for some 15 minutes which she listened to very carefully and attentively. When I paused, she said, "Have you finished?" Then Dr. Ramesh spoke for 5 minutes and gave some of his reports. She said, "I'll go through them carefully." We thanked her and left.

More than 300 cases including 'sedition' and 'waging war against the State' charges and life in self exile in a remote coastal village without any mobility, family, access to health care, and other essentials of life make me remember the 'Emergency' and MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) days. Yes, there is a silent emergency prevailing in India today. The State that accuses us of waging war against it is indeed waging a war against its own people. Also we have to ask what is seditious today in India. The Manmohan Singh government has scores of ministers who are accused of serious corruption and fraudulence charges but it is the common people like us who struggle for the safety and betterment of our people stand accused of sedition.

The Manmohan Singh government, the most controversial government independent India has ever had, has tried all kinds of dirty tricks to put down our struggle and the movement. They have been accusing us of receiving foreign money, acting at the behest of foreign powers, conspiring with the Catholic Church, conniving with opposition parties and so on. They have damaged my school, destroyed the poor little children's library books, vandalized the children's water taps, intimidated the family members, and indulged in all kinds of inhuman, devious and criminal behavior. The Indian government and the Department of Atomic Energy have refused to give any information to the public and are speaking half-truths, non-truths and complete nonsense just to mislead the country and enhance their own self interests.

Having exhausted all options to end opposition to the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant, the Government of India now plans to take a peek into all our minds and remove any fears with the help of psychiatrists from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bangalore. The government is getting sicker and sillier. Besides the prevailing 'silent emergency,' there is also a telling emergency in the country, viz. we are stuck with a government that works for foreign governments, foreign corporations, foreign interests, and cannot for a second accept the simple fact that 'Ordinary Indians' can think through policy issues, take a stand on them, and stand up for their rights. We have got an emergency situation indeed.

**S. P. Udayakumar**

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